



June 10, 2009

Charles Hoppin, Chair  
State Water Quality Control Board  
1001 I Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Support for staff recommendation on Item 8 - revised allocation of ARRA funds**

Dear Chair Hoppin and Board members;

On behalf of the Community Water Center, I am writing in support of the staff recommendation on Item 8 on your June 16<sup>th</sup> Agenda. The staff recommendation to divide the additional ARRA grant dollars equally between disadvantaged community wastewater projects and expanded use projects, prioritizing urban stormwater projects in disadvantaged communities is an equitable proposal that makes the most strategic use of these funds.

The Community Water Center works first-hand with many severely disadvantaged communities throughout the southern San Joaquin Valley that lack basic infrastructure, such as drinking water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure. Because of these challenges, residents face serious health consequences, as well as limitations on any opportunity for economic development in their communities. This proposal is an important opportunity to make funds available to begin to close the infrastructure gaps for our state's most disadvantaged communities.

While the applications for disadvantaged community wastewater projects totals more than \$250 million in projects, we know that there is more than \$1 billion in need in communities with few, if any other, resources to address wastewater systems that are creating threats to public health in these communities. In several of the communities on the small community wastewater grant list that we know of community members are literally walking in their own waste particularly during heavy rain events. We strongly supported the board's initial commitment to ensuring that at least 25 percent of the ARRA funding is set aside for grants to these communities and further support the allocation of an additional 7.5%, or \$21 million, to begin chipping away at the overwhelming need.

We also support the staff proposal to allocate the remaining \$21 million in available grant funding to urban stormwater projects that benefit disadvantaged communities. Many stormwater

1



agencies lack the revenue base to repay loans, particularly when those agencies serve predominantly disadvantaged communities. Urban flooding can create threats to public health and safety.

We commend the State Water Board staff for their strategic and thoughtful proposed distribution of these funds a distribution which we believe will result in projects that could not otherwise be built, and which will produce needed jobs in those communities most impacted by the nation's economic crisis.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Co-Executive Director & Attorney at Law